

## A TRIBUTE TO VINCENT BERGAMO

**HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 29, 1999*

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite our colleagues to join me in honoring Vincent Bergamo, a great American who has spent his life promoting and upholding the principles of fairness and opportunity in the sport of harness racing.

Judge Bergamo is to be honored in Goshen, N.Y. on July 4th at the Harness Hall of Fame Dinner, where he is to receive the coveted Proximity Award for long and outstanding service to the sport of harness racing. The award, in itself, is a microcosm of the splendid career that has defined Vincent's life. Beginning in 1958 at our Monticello Raceway, Vincent has always been a part of the harness racing family. His love and admiration for the sport, first gained as a youngster when he worked as a stable boy for the distinguished Harriman family of New York, has been consistently at a level above and beyond his colleagues, and helps to explain much of his accolades during his 40-year tenure.

A prominent leader from my Congressional district, Vincent was a Presiding Judge at The Goshen Historic Track for forty years until his retirement over a year ago. He truly was a pioneer in the harness racing industry and instrumental to the Goshen community in preserving tradition. Thirty-seven years ago, at a time when harness racing had hit a lull in interest, he instituted matinee racing at the Historic Track in an effort to provide young horses and amateur drivers the opportunity to gain worthwhile experience. His idea, practical and yet so perceptive in principle, became the blueprint for hundreds of other harness tracks across the country. With his help, harness rac-

ing has undergone a revival in public interest, an interest that can be directly tied to Judge Bergamo's vision of days past.

Vincent's success in harness racing came early and often, where at the age of 23 at the Saratoga Harness Racing Track, he became the youngest Presiding Judge in the history of the establishment. He has gone on to serve as presiding judge at every track in New York State, including tracks in the states of Florida, Maryland, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania. Accordingly, Vincent has been the recipient of numerous, well deserved harness racing awards, including: the United States Harness Writers Association (USHWA) Distinguished Service Award, the 1991 National Amateur Lifetime Award, the 1992 President's Medal of Harness Racing, the 1993 Elected Trustee of the Harness Racing Hall of Fame and Museum, and the 1994 William Houghton Memorial Award. Additionally, in 1986, Vincent was recognized for his 25 years of service to the Goshen Historic Track with "Bergamo Day". He has been a longtime member of USHWA and was the founder of the C.K.G. Billings Series in 1971. Vincent has even served as a teacher for many years, giving back to the community in which he was raised.

Still, no matter the heights to which Vincent has soared, his dignity, honesty, and responsibility remain at the core of his very essence. Always putting forth his best of efforts while being unwaveringly fair in his decisions, Vincent epitomizes the benefits of virtuosity. Wherever he has traveled and devoted himself as presiding judge, integrity abound.

For many years, I have had the pleasure of knowing Vince as a friend, a man whose character I respect as much as his career. In every area of life to which Vincent has given his time and effort, be it his wife, his children or the track, his imprint of genuine love and honesty remains like a badge of honor. Vince was never the man to shy from his convictions. His

directness and openness allows for not just quality officiating, but for better relationships. He is a family man who has raised 10 children, in each of whom Vince has instilled that same drive and work ethic. His wife, Marsha, and his late mother, Daisy, have been his support, providing strength and love when needed in his busy life.

One need not look any further than his efforts toward the Goshen Historic Track to appreciate all that Vincent has done. The oldest existing sporting site in the entire United States, Goshen Historic Track was doomed for closure when the Harriman family renounced their ownership of the land many years ago. However, due to the dedicated work of Vince on a purely voluntary level, he managed to have the Goshen Track designated as an Historic Site in the National Register, and thereby preserved it for years to come under the Board of Directors' supervision. Today, the Goshen Historic Track operates as a non-profit organization that hosts non-pari-mutuel harness racing seven days each year while serving as a training facility year round. The Track's altruistic roots run so deep that wagering and gambling are explicitly forbidden at races. One cannot help to think this motto of "sport for sport's sake" emanates directly from the legend of Vincent Bergamo and his positive influence on the sport.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "Nature never rhymes her children, nor makes two men alike." Vincent Bergamo's lifelong accomplishments attest to that premise. This man's outstanding character is so unique and special that it is hard to imagine there being another like him. I know that my colleagues will want to join me in saluting a remarkable person in Vincent Bergamo at the twilight of his illustrious career. A man who has given so much to others, Vincent deserves our recognition and commendations.